

PEOPLE & THINGS

SO much is happening in South Africa that the disposal of a single wood-and-iron homestead may be counted as of trivial importance.

But the house in question was for many years the home of one of the greatest of South Africans, Field-Marshal Smuts. It is possible, I hear, that the house in which he died at Irene, near Pretoria, may be turned at the end of this month into a home for the aged. If this should be done, its contents will be dispersed.

A correspondent tells me that it is in the study that one comes nearest to this great man. There he found not only the Field-Marshal's hats, books, walking-sticks and binoculars, but also the saddle which he used on his famous raid into Cape territory. Curiosity led him to look inside the saddle, which had not been opened for many years; and inside it he found a true measure of Smuts's interests—the books he had taken to read on the raid: a Greek Testament and a volume of Marcus Aurelius.

It would seem a pity that no proper care should be taken of this historic collection.

Home-made Teas

BERNARD SHAW once described tea as "the world's most civilised poison." It is now rapidly becoming the most expensive. And consumption in this country has risen by forty per cent. in the past three years.

An alternative to a Government subsidy of £80 million a year, to keep the price of tea down to 3s 8d. a pound, might be to try to grow the stuff at home, and it therefore seems worth saying that it is quite possible to grow the tea plant (*Camellia sinensis*) in the milder parts of the British Isles, although the few bushes that have been grown out of doors in botanical collections have rarely survived severe winters.

Plantation

IT seems that the Chinese plant is more likely to survive than the Assam or Indian varieties, and Sir Edward Salisbury, Director of the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew, considers it possible that there may exist strains in China, Japan or Russia which might prove still harder. He also confirms that for those enthusiasts who need not consider costs, it should be possible to cultivate the tea plant under glass, though the quality of the tea crop would be problematical.

Anyway, Sanders's "Encyclopaedia of Gardening" advises indoor planting of seeds in sandy peat, one-eighth inch down at a temperature of seventy-five degrees in March; or the insertion of cuttings of firm shoots in well-drained pots of sandy peat in a cool greenhouse in August, transferring the pots of cuttings in March to a temperature of fifty-five degrees, and planting the cuttings in small pots the following September.

Frederick the Invisible

FREDERICK THE GREAT is no longer regarded, in this country, as an ogre. Other and later Germans have proved so much more disagreeable than he that we can afford to regard him primarily as a Francophile, a Bautist, and a man of taste.

In East Berlin, however, he is an embarrassing encumbrance. Just how embarrassing I have learnt from some photographs in which is detailed the fate of the equestrian monument by Schinkel

By ATTICUS

which formerly stood in the Unter den Linden.

Up till 1950 the monument was hidden by an elaborate protection against air-raids. In June of that year this was taken down and the monarch was revealed in all his



The Phantom Rider, June 1950

inconvenience. Summer is the season of political processions, and even the naivest of demonstrators would be struck by the fact that Frederick the Great had survived intact, faced firmly east, and was ready, to all appearances, to ride on to the Oder.

Within a day or two the problem had been solved. Straw mats would render the monarch invisible! Straw mats were forthcoming; and, as may be seen from this photograph, horse and rider (pending their ultimate rustication to the park of Sans Souci) appeared as insubstantial phantoms to those who marched along the ruined highway to the East.

A Victory Enhanced

THAT there is still much to be said for foot-slogging archaeology is proved by the discovery on Samothrace of what are presumed to be the broken right hand and ring-finger of the Winged Victory which is now one of the two or three most famous exhibits in the Louvre.

I hear that the Greek Minister of Education and Antiquities has tabled a draft law which, if passed, will allow the Louvre to acquire the new fragments. These were found, it seems, just where the Winged Victory itself was discovered in 1863. Like the Victory, they are made of Parian marble, whereas almost everything else that has been discovered on Samothrace is made of marble from the neighbouring island of Thasos.

It would appear that the figure of Victory can no longer be assumed to be holding and blowing a trumpet; some lighter object, such as a metal wreath, would seem to have been held between its thumb and index finger.

An Ambassador's Books

EMBASSY libraries tend to be confused and impersonal: not descript, one might say. But Paris is now an exception to this rule—in that the pillared and high-ceilinged room which looks on to the curving forecourt of our Embassy is filled from top to bottom with the books bequeathed to it by the first Viscount Norwich.

I recently spent an hour there

and could detect, in the look of the books and their intensely personal assortment, the exuberant curiosity which made Duff Cooper the best liked of companions.

Diversities

SOME (like the Army Lists of the 1790s) reflected his passion for soldiering; the eight volumes of "Aus Metternich's Nachlass" bespoke the student of diplomacy; Bunyan and Smollett witnessed to his delight in plain speaking; and the amateur of good French confectionery had contributed "Toi Et Moi" and (a gift from the author) the plays of Henri Bernstein. Klotz's "Military Lessons of the Spanish Civil War" was carefully annotated in the Ambassador's own hand; and the champion of reading aloud had chosen "The Book of Gems," a verse anthology of the 1830s.

So broad were Duff Cooper's sympathies that when I came to the joke-titles which cover a hidden door I could hardly believe that "Recollections of a Visit to Egypt" by Mark Antony and "Hints on Gardening" by Adam and Eve were not the fruit of some all-seeing ramble among the bookstalls by the Seine.

Topic for Tomorrow

MUCH good is done by stealth in the B.B.C. Light Programme, which is too often regarded by those who do not listen to it as an inferno of triviality.

It is nearly six years, for instance, since the 10 p.m. news bulletin was first followed by a five-minute talk on some aspect of the day's news. "Topic for Tonight" reaches its 1,000th issue tomorrow; it has ranged far and nimbly—"From Mithras to T.U.C." might be its motto—and its panel of speakers has included many distinguished names; it contrives to instruct without pedantry and to amuse without inanity. If I look forward with particular pleasure to the 1,000th talk, it is because it will be given by my colleague Cyril Ray, who is one of the two surviving members of the original panel.

Babylonia

THE really colossal hotel, in Europe, is a survival from the past; and it is to the small, old-fashioned but nearly perfect establishment that high fashion betakes itself.

In America, on the other hand, the fascination of the Grand Babylon is undiminished—as I learn most vividly from an account of the recently opened Fontainebleau Hotel at Miami. This 14-million-dollar establishment was declared open by the Mayor of what is described in Miami as "Fontainebleau, France." Though mulcted by the U.S. Customs of a sapling from the Forêt de Fontainebleau which he had hoped to plant in front of the hotel, he was provided by the proprietor with a small Christmas tree.

The Mayor's remarks would seem to have followed the highest pattern of courtesy. But Mr. Horace Sutton, the wittiest of American travel-writers, detected an element of frantic incompleteness in the fourteen-storey palazzo. "When I leaned over the front desk to ask for mail," he says, "a carpenter began to build an inquiry window around me."